

# THE CATHOLIC ART QUARTERLY



1946  
PENTECOST  
VOL. IX, NO. 3



# The Catholic Art Quarterly

Official Bulletin of the Catholic Art Association

Printed four times a year, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Michaelmas cycles,  
at St. Cloud, Minn., with ecclesiastical approbation

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Business Communications and changes of address should be sent to the secretary, Sister Philomene, C.S.J., College of St. Catherine, St. Paul 1, Minnesota.

Articles intended for publication should be sent to Rev. William J. Kerrigan, St. Ambrose College, Davenport, Iowa.

Since the Catholic Art Quarterly appears only four times a year and space is consequently valuable, the policy has been adopted of not publishing material that is easily accessible in secular sources unless it is presented from a new or important angle, or is given a Catholic interpretation, and is in accord with Catholic Art Association principles.

## C.A.A. MEMBERSHIPS AND PRIVILEGES

SUSTAINING MEMBERS contribute \$25.00 annually toward the maintenance of the Association's work, receive the Catholic Art Quarterly, vote in all elections, and have access to the library and the exhibits.

PATRONAL MEMBERS contribute \$5.00 annually and have the above privileges.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS (schools, clubs, etc.) as a group contribute \$5.00 annually, send two voting delegates to conventions, have extended exhibit privileges, receive a subscription to the Quarterly, and may use the library and exhibits.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS contribute \$2.00 annually, receive the Quarterly, have one vote in all elections, may enter work in the C.A.A. exhibits, and may use the library.

National and regional conference privileges are shared by all members. Any member approved by the Advisory Board is eligible for office in C.A.A. elections.



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## President's Page

### ADVERTISING

WE have been asked several times why it is that we make no effort to solicit advertising in our quarterly. This method of revenue has been suggested whenever the cost of cuts, paper and printing is mentioned, and of the donations made by some few members in the interest of the Catholic Art Quarterly. Now some of the arguments advanced are not without merit. Such are arguments that the advertising-revenue would increase the size of the quarterly and would offset losses incurred in our present program; that they would permit the purchase of a variety of publishable articles and illustrations; that we would have bigger and better gallery pages for the display of the work of C. A. A. members, and of other artists.

Our magazine is not a profit-making venture. It was not conceived in the spirit of secularism. It was and is directed to the end of clarifying Catholic art, or any art. Were we to enter the field of commercial journalism undoubtedly our magazine could attract lucrative advertising commissions. This would permit it to expand into the slick-paper class with certified audits as to its advertising pull with subscription lists and club tie-ins. All in all our member-readers would probably receive a product very much like other contemporary magazines in spirit. And—if for the moment we might allow ourselves the luxury of day-dreaming—maybe someday we could even hope to become a Catholic Collier's.

But unfortunately we can't blind ourselves to the knowledge that in accepting advertising we take on added responsibilities. We know that one of the duties of sponsorship is a firm belief in the integrity of the thing being sponsored. We cannot take advertising moneys and hold ourselves aloof from the interest of the product advertised. To our mind it is deceitful to print enticing prose about a dubious product. It is equally un-Christian to accept pay for praising a particular brand of workmanship which we feel is not consonant with Christian making and doing.

As Christians we may not luxuriate in the laxity which many celebrities allow themselves who grant glowing testimonials for merchandise they never use and in which they do not believe. Such conduct is perverse



and, whatever else in contemporary practice it may be, in Christian morality it is clearly defined as an aberration of the right use of a faculty,—in this case an aberration of the faculty of the communication of ideas—which always is sinful.

The reading matter in magazines which accept advertising actually tends to become more and more a dramatization of the desirability of things therein advertised. For example, do not the stories in our tremendously popular women's magazines make fascinating a milieu of which the products those magazines advertise are a necessary part? We cannot lend our columns to serve such ends without abandoning our original purposes.

Thus for example we could not urge our readers to do for themselves many of the things which they have been accustomed to giving over to professionals. As one example among many we could not suggest that our members do their own wood-engraving and linoleum block-cutting and in the same issue take an advertisement from the photo-engraver. Nor could we urge parish priests to have their parishioners design, cut and sew the parish vestments and altar linens, while on the opposite page we carry an ad for genuine imported machine-made, liturgical, full-blown, gothic vestments. Nor could we accept the specious 'before-and-after' type of advertising: 'what-your-church-looked-like-before-we-came-on-the-job-and-what-it-looks-like-now-that-we-have-given-it-the-loving-lather-of-our-good-taste.'

If we should ever see the by-line at the bottom of a magazine page "patronize our advertisers" or "please mention the Catholic Art Quarterly when writing to our advertisers" we would know that the magazine carries the favor of advertisers and walks unconsciously nearer the line prescribed by its advertising clientele, that it listens attentively to the voice of its commercial commitments rather than the command of its conscience. We sometimes wish that editors would be required to sign some of the claims they allow advertisers to make in their columns.

Please do not misunderstand us. We do not hint that all advertising is neighbor to charlatanism. Neither do we mean that we will never mention any products in our columns. On the contrary we feel that it is our Christian duty to mention artifacts which deserve our praise, just as we feel it our duty to warn our readers against books which err in Christian thinking. We will not hesitate to state the goodness and integrity of a product, book or a work. No less will we refuse to praise a work if it defects from Christian principles. The only restraint we impose upon ourselves is that we refuse to accept pay for praise expended. After all it is only Christian to communicate to others the good we have received.

We are free from the constraint imposed by the acceptance of fees for false praise. We are likewise perfectly free to say and to think what we deem to be right making and right Christian thinking, even though such speaking may shame producers of shoddy work.



# The First Nine Years

by Graham Carey



It is now almost five years since we met together in our last National Convention at Mount Mary College in Milwaukee. That is a long time. It is just about half of the whole life of our Association. Sister Esther has told us that she regards an editorial by Mr. Peyton Boswell in the March, 1937, issue of the *Art Digest* as our real starting point. If we began in March, 1937, and this is April, 1946, then we are already in the beginning of our tenth year. It seems to me that we have here an excellent occasion to review the history of the C. A. A. to see where we started, where we have arrived, and to make new resolutions as to where we want to go and new plans as to how we propose to get there.

It is not easy to review the intellectual growth of an association like ours over a period of nine years. There are many strands that have had to be woven together to make the single cable. It is hard to grasp the nature of each strand, see how each is related to the others, how each has grown and merged into the others as a part of its own growth, and to assign to the proper time, place and person its position of importance as an instrument of that growth. For as we have gone along together in our study of the realities of Catholic Art, we have seen again and again, and with an accelerating rhythm, the relationships between things that had previously seemed not only unrelated to each other, but unrelated to Art. Social action, philosophy, manufacture, humility, writing, industrialism, agriculture, history, symbolism, and pagan religions—what had all these to do with one another, or with the business of making beautiful things?

Perhaps a better analogy for the intellectual development I am trying to trace would be this: We must picture a large glass sphere, semi-transparent, perhaps six feet in diameter, and ourselves regarding it, walking all around it, peering at it from the outside. At first we are conscious only of the surface, and of the dazzle of images that the surface reflects. But soon we learn to distinguish things, mysterious shadows perhaps, beneath and within. Sometimes and in some places we can see more deeply into the sphere than at others. The deeper our vision penetrates, the closer together are the objects of our study, and the simpler and clearer are the patterns of their arrangement. At last we realize that all these things are related to the center, and we see that, if our vision could pierce to the center itself, all confusions would vanish, and we should enjoy a complete understanding.



But whatever analogy we use, whether the weaving of strands into a rope, or the piercing of shadows in a mysterious crystal, or some other, the reality that I am trying to describe is a deepening and broadening of our understanding of that immense subject, Catholic Art.

It is interesting that the initial act in the history of the Association should have been the work of a non-Catholic, and that its motivation should have been on a rather secular level. Broadly speaking, Mr. Boswell's point was simply that in the Ages of Faith the Catholic churches were full of beautiful things, whereas today the corresponding churches are full of "gaudy mediocrities." "He called upon the sisters working earnestly in the art field, 'the valiant few', to evolve an art worthy of the spirit and history of the Church."\*

Sister Esther's response was immediate. She at once sent Mr. Boswell her plan for an association which would:

1. Revive a truly Christian Creative Art.
2. Raise the standards of art appreciation among our people.
3. Work for the elimination of 'the blasphemy of ugliness' from our churches.
4. Formulate and uphold a code of objectives for the Art Departments of Catholic Colleges in conformity with the Holy Father's wish that "Faith may guide the arts."



IN reply to Mr. Boswell's question: "Why are the churches that once were filled with seemliness and beauty now be filled with hideous vulgarity?" Sister Esther answered with many wise and true words; but chief among these was the word "social." She named our Quarterly *The Christian Social Art Quarterly*. In the Fall, 1938 issue she wrote: "The primary purpose back of all the worry and labor which must of necessity be poured into such an enterprise is the determination to foster a *truly Christian Creative Art*, an Art Christian in principle and social in its applications. Catholic Art today is a disgrace. . . . (but) the remedy will have to be administered by each suffering individual to himself and without sugar coating."† An anonymous contributor to the Devil's Advocate column later‡ voiced the same idea. "'Art' is social of its nature. Catholic Art is also social by its very being; it flows from out the inner Catholicism

\* C. A. Q. Vol. I, No. 1, p. 1.

† Vol. I, No. 4, p. 5.

‡ Vol. IV, No. 3, p. 30.



of what we so lovingly call, on account of the revelation vouchsafed us through St. Paul, the mystical body of Christ." And very recently, Walter Shewring has written for us:\* "Man is a social animal; and therefore, St. Thomas says profoundly, he needs to be helped by others if he is to attain *his own* goal . . . As the artist owes it to his intelligence that his work shall be reasonable, so he owes it to his good will that his work shall be not only useful to someone but, as far as may be, useful communally."

In the Ages of Faith these truths were everywhere accepted. The medieval artists was neither a strutting exhibitionist, nor a purveyor of pleasures, but a good servant. The Christian social ideal is that we are all servants of each other, imitating the servitude of one part of the body to the other. The modern idea of individual mastery is in many ways the exact opposite of the Christian idea of social service. "I am inclined to think," wrote Sister Esther,† "that it is the practice of working at masterpieces that is responsible for the lack of mastery today." Only by a return to this serious social ideal could the arts be purified and "the blasphemy of ugliness" begin to disappear. Such, in much simplified form, was Sister Esther's answer to Mr. Boswell's question.



ER ideas were soon put into action. A preliminary meeting was held in May, 1937, and this was followed in October by the Organization meeting, which was also the first National Convention, at St. Mary of the Woods. It was at this point that I joined the Association, and my contribution was, I think this: The scholastic doctrine of four causes is often thought of only as an instrument for the clarification of metaphysical and theological matters. But it is also very useful in explaining things on the lower plane, that of human arts and human

artists. On this lower level the totality of artistic problems may, by its aid, be studied with a minimum of confusion. This application of a well established philosophic instrument for the clarification of our own artistic problems seemed to be just what we needed at this stage in our development. We found this doctrine a valuable tool for the clarification of artistic thinking, and it came just at the right moment in the development I am describing, as it threw much light on the implications of the word "Social" on which Sister Esther had been insisting. It fixed the proper spheres of artist and patron, maker and user, and related both to techniques.

\* Vol. VIII, No. 3, p. 10.

† Vol. I, No. 2, p. 28.





RELATIVELY few books have had the effects that resulted from the publication in 1923 of Maritain's *Art et Scholastique* in English. It revealed "to many readers for the first time" a traditional theory of art which had been almost completely overlaid by the misty thinking of modern times" (Walter Shewring). One of the minds to which the scholastic doctrine came as a revelation was that of Eric Gill, who would perhaps never have become a writer had it not been for the intellectual stimulus and guidance he received at this time. Eric Gill's writings have probably been more important in the development of the C. A. A. than those of any other man. He was early interested in our efforts although he was never unreservedly enthusiastic. "Those nuns," he once wrote, "still have a lot of art-foolishness to get over." Perhaps the earliest lesson we learned from Maritain through the mouth of Gill concerned the *breadth* of art. We began to understand that we had been wrong in accepting the modern limitations of art, which narrowed it to the making of one kind of things only—pictures, poems, statues, music—things whose purpose was the enjoyment of their beauty. We began to see that this was a snobbish error, essentially un-Catholic, and introduced into European thought at the end of the Middle Ages, when much Christian principle was abandoned. We learned to understand St. Thomas's definition that "*Ars est recta ratio factibilium*," right plan of things to be made. All kinds of things, including not only paintings, poems, statues and music, but barns, machines and cooking pots as well. We appreciated that art is not the affair of specialists, dealing only with aesthetic problems, but of unspecialized mankind, dealing with constructive problems of all sorts and descriptions.

In April, 1939, the first Eastern Regional Conference was held here at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, with Sister Noreen presiding, and Sister Esther's greeting to the members here assembled included words which are to the point here. "Art as we understand it is not only the painting of pictures, or the carving of statues, or the other activities known as fine art. They are all included, of course, but we take the broader scholastic sense of the word. Art is human making in its most complete sense—i. e. the making of things which are at once true, beautiful and good, the holiness of man in all his works. Participation in this making is the right and heritage of every human being, and anything, whether system of education or industrial practice, which denies him this right is, to that extent, blameworthy."\*

As Walter Shewring has written recently,† "Art is human working—mental and physical—as directed by the mind rather than the will." All

\*C. A. Q. Vol. II, No. 2, p. 7.

†C. A. Q. Vol. VIII, No. 3, p. 10.



human work is directed by the mind. What definition could have greater breadth than that?



IN the spring of 1939 the Quarterly published an article on St. Therese of Lisieux by Eric Gill,\* which developed a good deal further one aspect of this conception of the breadth of art. Gill's point was that the word "little" that is associated with this holy woman—"little flower", "little way"—has too often been understood in a sort of sentimental sense, the connotation being that of a sort of tiny or amusing toy, something "cunning" or "cute" in the popular meaning of those words; whereas the idea intended to be conveyed was that of simple *humility*. Gill was interested in this idea in its application to the arts, and in its clarifying power with regard to their breadth.

Ade de Bethune, who joined the Association in its earlier years, used to tell a story on herself that nicely illustrates this point. She was interested in lettering as a design problem, and had set herself a daily calligraphic exercise, under the guidance of Edward Johnston's great book: *Writing and Lettering and Illuminating*. She was living away from home at this time, and was in the habit of writing a daily postal card to her parents, but she often somewhat bitterly begrudged the time that the scribbling of her daily card took away from that which she wanted to put on her lettering exercise. And then one day all of a sudden the great light dawned, and she saw the perfectly obvious truth that if she wrote her card with the same care and perfection as she used on her exercise, she would be saving time, integrating her life and giving her parents a more worthy gift. The solution was to make an art of what she had to do in any case.

Through the history of the C. A. A., the emphasis that has been given to the art of writing has had this reason. We must all do some writing, even if it is only the signing of our name to a typed letter, or the jotting down of a column of figures to be added up. This necessity, given its full artistic richness in application is the basis of our calligraphy. We must all write, why not write well? Why not humble ourselves to write well?

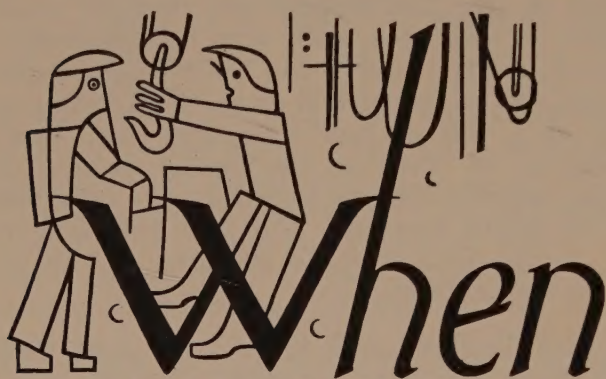
Many names could be mentioned in this connection besides Edward Johnston's as influential in the development of our calligraphic ideas and practices. It was John Julian Ryan, the author of *The Idea of a Catholic College*, who taught us the importance of the kinaesthetic faculty in writing, and the relationship between kinaesthetic and visual images is developed in *The Elements of Lettering*, by John Howard Benson, a distinguished

\*C. A. Q. Vol. II, No. 2, p. 19.



calligrapher, and myself. The work of Sister Louis Marie, O. P., as a teacher has been of importance, while Father Catich's unique combination of experience as a sign-writer and as a student of paleography has given him an exceptional insight into the nature of the Roman alphabet.

But motivating the work of true calligraphers there is not an aesthetic end so much as the purely Christian idea that what we do we should try to do as perfectly as we can for the honor and glory of God.



this principle, which has been simply labeled: DO IT WELL, is not clearly grasped, it is sometimes confused with another known as: DO IT YOURSELF; but the ideas behind these two kinds of DO IT are really quite distinct from one another. *Do it yourself* was perhaps the next lesson that we learned as we advanced in our study of Catholic art. It was mentioned many times during our third National Convention at St. Paul, and a year later at Adrian we saw it actively in operation, where various craftsmen in the demonstration booths were busily engaged in doing themselves things that we often get experts of one sort or another to do for us. Eric Gill was fond of quoting an aphorism of Father D'Arcy's: "Industrialism has deprived the artist of the necessity of making anything useful." That is unfortunately true. Industrialism has taken a large number of simple every-day jobs away from simple every-day people, deprived these jobs of their intellectual significance or symbolism, and of much of their perfection or artistry, and has turned them over to specialists, whose concern with them is exclusively economic—a matter of wages, working conditions and five o'clock. By thus losing activities which, potentially at least, are both artistic and analogical, the common people so deprived are obviously left the poorer. And the specialist who is assigned the monotonous task of rattling the dry bones of what was once living and humane work is impoverished also. Henceforth, whatever enjoyment the worker is to find in work must be found after working hours. And we are educated by the forces of industrialized society to believe that the change from our former craft world is not only a progress toward human betterment, but an inevitable progress.

There are some minds that resist the powers of industrial persuasion, but there is not much that these can do as a group. They can, however, to some extent, resist industrialism as individuals. You or I or any one of



us can refuse to take more part than he has to in the enslavement of his fellow human beings. When something gets out of order we can often resist the impulse to "get a man to fix it", and try to fix it ourselves. If we find that we are up against something that we cannot in the nature of things fix, then we can try to organize our personal lives so as to eliminate, as far as possible, all non-fixable gadgets. This means a willingness to get along without the gadget and originality or a return to origins.



humble return to simplicities and origins cannot be very fully achieved in Megalopolis. If we undertake to wage war on the gadgets we must choose our battleground, and choose it where there is the least chance of our defeat. To work against industrialism we must get as far as possible out of the power of industrialism, free from the physical and mental bondage

which is part of its system. For most people this means a return to rural living, where there may be found a more even balance between the tending of natural things—agriculture—and the making of artificial things; and where both agriculture and artifice may be practiced as sacred rather than commercial or secular activities.

Emboldened by the dictum of a great pope\* that "Agriculture is the first and most important of all the arts," the C. A. Q. printed articles from time to time stressing the importance of our concern with it as Catholics and artists. As early as the fall of 1938 there was "Art on a Community Farm" by Miss Marjorie Nazer, followed by another article of hers in the next issue.† There was Mrs. Stearn's paper on "Old Monastic Gardens"‡ and two articles, on "The Soil and on Composting" by Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer.\*\* These last two were probably of greater importance than was at once apparent to all our readers. The soil is the material basis of our life, and the chief agricultural problem of our time in its restoration from its condition of depletion and impoverishment, to a point where it can again sustain healthy human and animal life. Not only our souls and spirits, but also our bodies, are in need of regeneration, and only by means of the arts of soil restoration will this physical regeneration be possible.

Of our executive officers, Sister Helene, O. P., for several years our secretary, has associated herself as fully as possible with the Catholic Land Movement in general, and with the Rural Life Conference in particular. Of our five Advisers two are agricultural workers, and another will be so as soon as he is released from the service.

\*C. A. Q. Vol. V, No. 1, p. 20.

†C. A. Q. 1, 4 and 11, 1.

‡Vol. VII, No. 4, p. 21.

\*\*Vol. V, No. 1 and 3.



Walter Shewring, in a recent issue of the C. A. Q.,\* has stated the relation between Christian art and Christian agrarianism with beautiful clarity and succinctness. I can do no better than to quote his words: "Art cannot be isolated from the community, and if we wish to return to normal art we must first return to a normal society. The man must precede the artist, and we must recover the human person before we recover human making.

"Hence our immediate concern as Catholics is not with the problems of modern painters and novelists, interesting and exalted though these may be. Rather it is with a fully Christian life, and through it with the restoration of those conditions in which the common arts can flourish—conditions towards which we are directed in the encyclicals of the modern Popes. To change a state of things where 'immense power and tyrannous economic supremacy are centered in the hands of a few' (Pius XI), to induce 'as many as possible of the people to prefer the status of owner' (Leo XIII), to regain for everyone 'the right of a reasonable liberty in the choice of a walk of life and the following of a true vocation' (Pius XII)—these things are our first and essential task.

"If the restoration now of a complete Christian society seems all but impossible, we are not therefore released from effort. What nations refuse to do, individuals may accept. We may form—we may at least help others who form—a small Catholic community where the Christian life is sought whole; we may resolve to earn our own livelihood usefully and responsibly; we may assure ourselves that the things we use are well made, and that we pay a just price for them. Action such as this, whether it is imitated or not, is good in itself and cannot be in vain. If it is imitated widely, the way will be open in due time to a true Christian civilization, a true Christian art. If it is not, it would seem that the world must disintegrate yet further before Christendom returns. But that is not ours to judge."



UT for most of us an immediate return to the land, however desirable, is not a feasibility. For the present at least, most of us must remain in our towns, our schools and colleges. And here we continue to meet the problems of the secular "art world." One of these is the conflict between the *moderns*, *functionalists*, advocates of the *progressive* and *experimental* view of art, on the one hand, and the *conservatives* or *traditionalists* on the other. On which side was the C. A. A., as it began to get its legs under it, going to line up? There seemed to be much sound argument, and also much exaggeration, on each side. But we had come far enough to see the simple synthesis behind this war of the artistic factions. Dr. Lee Bowen

\* Vol. VIII, No. 3.



was writing in the *Quarterly* in defense of "functionalism," and in the same breath in defense of traditionalism, and a proper attitude of reverence for the past. Here at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, at the Symposium on Christian Art\* held in December, 1939, and at the fourth National Conference at Adrian, Dr. Bowen spoke eloquently words that, to advocates of the artistic ideologies, had any been there to hear him, must have sounded like the rankest self-contradiction. But we understood where the simple truth lies.

He showed us that all healthy art is modern, in that it is related to and governed by the realities of its own time. No healthy art is derivative, in the sense of repeating the outward shapes of things of another period, no matter how beautiful these things may be—shapes which are the results of causes which no longer exist. And obviously, all healthy art must be functional, rigorously pruning away all excrescences that interfere with the good use of the object in question. To the extent that conditions change, and old problems demand new solutions to keep up with the changed conditions, and old principles demand new manifestations, to that extent all healthy art must be progressive, and contain an element of experimentation. These are the truths that the advocates of the progressive school of art proclaim, and upon which they base much of their practice; and the C. A. A. joins them heartily in their enthusiasm for these truths.

But on the other hand there is a healthy as well as an unhealthy conservatism. The times do not change as rapidly as those would have us believe whose incomes depend upon the dissemination of novelties. Principles do not change at all, though they may be forgotten. By our own experiments we can hope to learn only a very small part of what we need to know. For the rest we have to lean in humility on the knowledge of those already in the field. Most of the truths and techniques necessary for a good life were discovered and perfected a very long time ago. Few of us can expect to be prophets, discoverers, trail blazers along truly constructive lines. The wise man is the humble man, and it is he who borrows everything good he can from his ancestors, and drops everything bad like a hot coal. And the wise man exercises a similar discrimination amongst new things, selecting what seems to him innocent and of good promise, and rejecting—no matter how fashionable—what is manifestly bad. So doing, the artist has in his grasp all the possible advantages for good work, and a minimum of disadvantages. If any man carry out this program consistently, in due course the wisdom of the wise ones of the past will come and dwell with him.

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\*C. A. Q. Vol. II, No. 4, p. 3.





HENEVER we begin a serious study of the arts of the past, we immediately run into a seemingly fantastic business called *symbolism*. In the realm of symbolic art nothing seems to mean what it says, and meanings flow into one another in a curiously irrational, oblique and thoroughly disturbing way. You are told

that the letter A stands for the bull, that the bull is a symbol of the sun, and that the sun is a symbol for God. And then you are informed that the sun is a door, a window and a chimney, and that it is a lion, an eagle, a chariot drawn by horses, and countless other things besides. One's immediate reaction to all this sort of thing is usually "If an artist or poet has something important that he wants to say, why can't he say it simply and straightforwardly, calling things by their accepted names? What is the use of all this elaborate imagery, this obscurity and the dark sayings?"

I must admit that for many years I found it easier to ask such questions than to get them answered. For example there was in G. K. Chesterton's weekly review a sort of symposium on art, in which many English artists, including Eric Gill, had their word to say. Because this was in England, the object which the debators had chosen for an illustration to their arguments was a tea-cup. I remember that one of the writers, attempting to give a full description of the perfect tea-cup, stated that it should also have a symbolic function, and should represent the universe. This writer wrote clearly and well. He obviously meant something. But what could such a statement mean? And even if it meant something, was that something very important? It all seemed very puzzling.

But if the C. A. Q. had been fifteen or twenty years older, and I had been a subscriber at that time, my questions would have been soon answered. For, thanks in large part to the work of Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, we have had an opportunity to understand the essence of symbolism, and its central position in all traditional and religious arts. Eric Gill has written of Dr. Coomaraswamy: "I have a great respect for his learning and understanding. . . . He is the most downright lucid man I know . . . I do not know anybody with so clear a head as he." The Quarterly printed three of his essays, *Ornament*,\* *Ars Sine Scientia Nihil*† and *Why Exhibit Works of Art?*‡ but his scholarship has chiefly been of benefit to the C. A. A. through the writings of others.

\* Vol. IV, 2.

† Vol. VI, 2.

‡ Vol. VI, 3.

We have come to understand that symbolism is the very kernel of the artistic nut. What we have learned may perhaps be stated, in its most simplified form, somewhat as follows: All serious and religious people wish to imitate the perfection of God, and therefore in their acts to imitate His acts. They wish to do this not only in intention but in form; that is, not only as a matter of goodness and behavior, but *in truth*. Whatever, therefore, the people of a sacred society make or do there will be found analogies, attempts at a repetition on a tiny, finite and human scale of God's great makings and doings. So everything made in a traditional society has not only a practical function but a metaphysical or theological meaning. It is not merely a human instrument, but a copy of a divine instrument, an analogy of something specifically God's. Thus, when a man builds a house for the habitation of his family he tries to follow as far as he can the pattern used by the Creator when He built the Universe to be the habitation of humanity as a whole. This is the meaning of traditional symbolism. To quote Dr. Coomaraswamy:\* "We contend that nothing has been gained, but very much lost, both spiritually and practically, by our modern ignorance of the meanings of superstitions, which are in fact "stand-overs" that are only meaningless to us because we have forgotten what they mean. If a thunder storm is no longer for us the marriage of Heaven and Earth, but only a discharge of electricity, all that we have really done is to substitute a physical for a metaphysical level of reference; the man is far more a man who can realize the perfect validity of both explanations, each on its own level of reference. Of the man who could look up to the roof of his house or temple, and say 'there hangs the Supernal Sun,' or down at his hearth and say 'there is the Navel of the Earth,' we maintain not only that his house and temple were the more serviceable to him and the more beautiful in fact, but in every sense much more such homes as the dignity of man demands than are our own machines to live in."

But true symbolism is a product of truly sacred societies. As soon as the arts ceased to be sacred and became secularized, symbolism dropped out of the artist's mind as a living, creative, religious force. In his memory only the dead bodies of once living symbols remained. Through habit the artist continued to carve volutes on the capitals of his supporting shafts, or lions' claws on the feet of the royal throne, or kept a round hole open at the top of his vaulted dome; but he had forgotten *why* these things had been done. The volutes were graceful, the claws "of the period," and the eye of the dome had historic precedent. These were the new artist's reasons. The elaborations of his work were "ornaments," "decorations," and relieved the bareness of otherwise empty surfaces. The new artist had already not only forgotten the meaning of the things he made, but soon he had forgotten that such things had ever had a meaning, and would insist that the motives of the men of old time in making such things were the same as his own in making his reproductions. Artists and patrons together came to believe that the reason for such adjuncts was that they made the utility

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\* Symbolism of the Dome, p. 56.



they adorned "beautiful" or "attractive," and that that was their only reason. We reached the bottom of this decline into degeneracy when practically the whole "artistic world" came to agree that the motives of the arts of decoration and adornment were aesthetic motives, and that the preexistence of intellectual motives was the delusion of a few learned but mad traditional cranks.

It is from this low point in the history of artistic thought that we of the C. A. A. are making our way up. The secular or frivolous notion of art as amusement has taken the place of the sacred and serious notion that the imitation of God in all things is an obvious duty. It is our task to restore these conceptions to their rightful order. If secular "Art" has usurped the place of sacred symbolism, we did well to set ourselves to oust the usurper, and to encourage the King to return to his throne.



**I**N traditional and religious cultures, art and worship are so closely linked together by the symbolic point of view, that Catholics are sometimes alarmed that an admiration of the arts of non-Christian peoples will lead to an admiration for the religions of non-Christian peoples, and this to a weakening of faith in the religion of Christ. The study of symbolism in particular brings us repeatedly into the presence of the great minds of the pagan world, and to these great ones we properly make gestures of gratitude and respect. Catholics who are not troubled when appeals are made to the authority of Aristotle, Plato, or Plotinus, are apt to become uncomfortable if a similar reference is made to the masters of Chinese or Indian thought. The habit of centuries plus of course the special approval given them by the Church has emboldened us to drink from the well-springs that flow from Greece without fear of being poisoned, but this is not the case with the sages of the Orient, whose thoughts have only recently been made abundantly available to the readers of the Western world and though used by Christian writers have not always been recognized as oriental. We do not feel on sure ground, and are apt to react with a sort of blind defensiveness, apparently afraid that we may be seduced into believing that all religions are of equal value, and that the uniqueness and universality the Catholic Church is an illusion.

Such fears, where they exist, should be squarely met; for if not, and our view of art is limited to the work of Christians, particularly contemporary ones, there is not very much hope of our understanding our basic problems, and finding productive solutions. If we are to get very far in our appointed task of reforming Catholic art, we must not be afraid to study with care the productions of any and all peoples.

Sister Esther, in the Christmas issue of the Quarterly a year ago, wrote as follows: \* "Human integrity means acting according to the best light furnished by human reason and experience. Many non-Christians have had it; many Christians have had it not \* \* \* \* \*. As a human activity, art is no more Christian than eating, drinking, dancing or digging. It can be done well by a Hindu, a Moslem, a Pagan, or a Jew, and has often been done much better by them than by contemporary Christians. We must understand this well and not deceive ourselves with the idea that all good art, or even the best of it, is necessarily Christian. The security of our religious faith does not guarantee us impeccability in art. In such human matters we are so to speak on our own.

"The pre-Columbian Mayans produced an art so far unequaled on this continent. The ancient Greeks have never been surpassed. The Chinese are an unfathomed miracle of ingenuity and skill even to this day. These people were all Pagans. The Greek artistic concept has, it is true, contributed its influence to the Christian heritage, but the Mayan has not, nor yet the Chinese. The excellence of a people's art is not an index to its Christianity but to its natural or human integrity.

"It is secularism, unreligion, anti-religion that is the enemy, the pestilence. It is a pestilence that has infected the whole Western World, and which the purveyors of pestilence are at this moment busily engaged in spreading among those peoples who, though not Christian, are nevertheless still religious. Again and again missionaries have returned from Asia, Africa and the islands of the Pacific to tell us that it is these people, who have not yet been seduced from their sacred attitude to life, who have not yet drunk of the white man's poison, who are the hope of the Catholic church. It is these so say the missionaries, who because they already have a fundamentally religious attitude of mind, are ready and eager to accept the religion of Christ. Our own secular world does not believe in any religion worthy of the name, and therefore has no desire to be converted to the Truth. There are happily exceptions here and there, and the Church gains new children as well as she loses old ones, but to hope for a general conversion to Christ of the millions of a secularized society is presumption. And how can we help non-Christian peoples to retain their sacred cultures if we do not know what a sacred culture is?"

But we may go even further than this. If we understand our own religion aright, we may regard not only the arts of the non-Christian without fear, but his beliefs also. "In the first place it may be said that all truth, whether natural or revealed, has its source in one God who has finally revealed himself in Christianity; it was to all truth that Christ came to bear witness; and therefore, as St. Justin said in the second century, "All the good doctrine of all men belongs to us Christians."† Or as St. Thomas liked to quote from St. Ambrose: "Every truth, no matter by whom spoken, is from the Holy Spirit." How, indeed, could it be otherwise?

\* C. A. Q. VIII, No. 1, p. 11.

† W. Shewring, C. A. Q. Vol. VIII, No. 3, p. 3.



We are Catholics, believing that the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is a fact, a unique fact, qualitatively different from the appearance of any avatar or holy man. So believing we can look with untroubled eyes at the doctrines of non-Christian peoples, as at their artistic works. Fear on our part is as out of place and presumptuous as it was in the heart of Uzza, who stretching out his hand to keep the ark of the covenant from tottering was struck dead by the Lord for his presumption. Wherever wisdom is to be found, intelligent Catholics have nothing to fear in learning from it; for wise words, by whomsoever uttered, are from the Holy Ghost.



great conflict in the world today is not between the Catholic and the Protestant, nor again between these two banded together against the non-Christian; it is between religion and secularism. A sacred society is not one that has exclusive possession of religious truth. It is one in which people are serious—although sometimes grievously misled—in the application to the whole of life of whatever vestiges of religious truth they possess. And a secular society is one in which people, no matter how solemn they may be about it, are frivolous and do not apply their religion.

So it really comes down to this: The Catholic Art Association exists to restore the arts of Catholic people to their full dignity as sacred rather than secular activities. As its members we thus find ourselves naturally in sympathy with the people of all other sacred cultures, and in conflict with the ideas, artistic and social, of all frivolous groups, even when these are nominally Catholic. What people of sacred cultures know is a common human heritage, which our ancestors also once knew, but which has been lost. In gaining back our heritage, we need not be surprised, or disturbed, to find that what we so earnestly seek, many non-Christian peoples seem never to have lost. In most of them we will find that art is an affair not of the individual, but of society; that in its practice there is a due, though probably unconscious, regard for the four causes; that art is not limited to the making of emotive objects only; that the necessity for humility is recognized; that there is no over specialization, or urbanization; but that art is traditional, and a means by which men can assert their relationship to God.

If we Catholics could return to our artistic heritage as human beings, and add that to our superhuman heritage, children of God—heirs also—we would indeed be worthy of the name of our association.

# The Central Altar

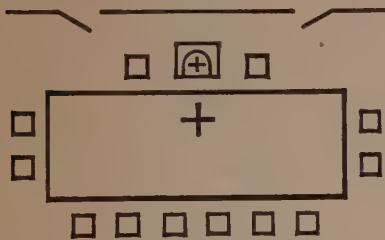
(Continued from the Easter Edition)

## III SOME HISTORICAL MANIFESTATIONS

Having looked at the question of the position of the Christian altar from the point of view of traditional symbolism, let us take a brief glance at the actual historical development, from the beginning to the present in which these symbols are expressed. Only the roughest and most general outline is here possible. For our present purpose we hope that the dividing of the story into seven chapters will give a sufficiently clear and accurate notion of what happened. Sometimes a rough sketch-map is a better guide for the wayfarer than the most detailed air photograph.

### MASS IN THE CENACLE.

The first altar was the table of the Last Supper, presumably a common wooden dining table, and presumably arranged as traditional paintings show it. The "Fractio Panis" fresco of the Capella Greca in the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, dating from the first decades of the second century, is believed to be the earliest representation of the Eucharistic feast, and shows just such a common wooden household table, and was



probably similar to its holy prototype. Christ, we may suppose, sat in the middle of one side with his back toward a wall, his apostles on each side of Him. He faces out of the picture, towards the spectator, who represents the people in general. We may feel quite sure that his ministers brought him the food and wine from behind that He might taste, to prove to his guests

that it was untainted and therefore good, before He distributed it to them. Thus today the father of the family cuts the roast and serves out the portions to the members of his family. Christ's first miracle is an illustration of this, changing water into wine, sending it to the steward who, taking the place of the master on this busy occasion, pronounced the wine fit for the wedding guests. If these suppositions are correct, we have at the last Supper, itself, the typical disposition of the persons concerned: The celebrant behind the table and facing the people, flanked and supported by his ministers and co-priests.

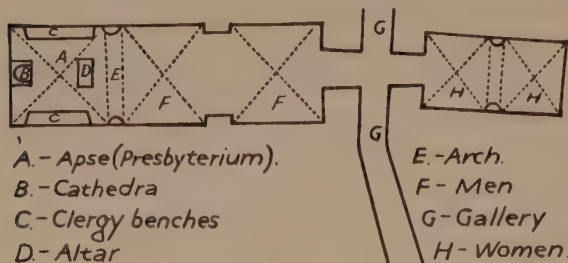
When we try to imagine the actual scene at the Last Supper we are unconsciously influenced by the arrangements that we have seen in formal paintings of the subject, particularly in the famous painting of Leonardo da Vinci. Here for valid pictorial reasons, no figure turns its back to the spectator, and the whole front of the Holy Table is quite empty. Such an arrangement may be proper in a pictorial composition, but we are not to suppose that it has respectability as an historic fact.

### MASS IN THE CATACOMBS.

During the times of persecution the Roman



authorities strictly observed the laws of the Twelve Tables regarding the inviolability of burial places and the rights of the many insurance or burial societies. Even in the worst times the Christians were able to offer mass in a catacomb where and when an actual interment was to be made. The



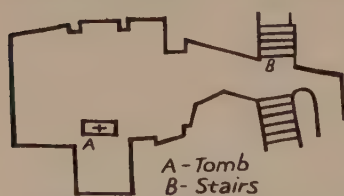
A - Apse (Presbyterium).  
B - Cathedra  
C - Clergy benches  
D - Altar  
E - Arch.  
F - Men  
G - Gallery  
H - Women.

Arrangement of a subterranean church in the Greater Cemetery of Saint Agnes in Rome:

stone sarcophagus of a martyr was used as an altar, the stone lid being called *mensa*, *mensa domini*, *mensa dominica*. Diverging from the little chamber which was the martyr's burial place the fossors dug many passages in which the Christian dead were buried, always as close as possible to the Saint's body. Mass at these altars was presumably said facing

the galleries which contained the worshippers. Here is the origin of the stone altar, conceived of as of two parts, *stirpes* and the *mensa*, with a hollow, the *sepulchrum*, scooped out of the former and providing a resting place for the relics of the martyr, which from this time forth became a required adjunct to the sacrifice. As a sarcophagus by nature is long and narrow, the shape of the sacrificial table was also established as a long rectangle.

But mass could not be said with immunity in the catacombs except on the occasion of a bona fide funeral, and therefore these masses were the exception rather than the rule. Daily mass was offered, with great secrecy, in the crypts or cellars of private houses; and here wooden portable altars or tables were used. The "Fractio Panis" picture shows six men and a veiled woman at such a table, one of the men, apart from the rest, in the act of breaking a loaf of bread. Before him is a two handled cup, and the board is otherwise bare, save for two dishes, one holding two fish, and the other five loaves.

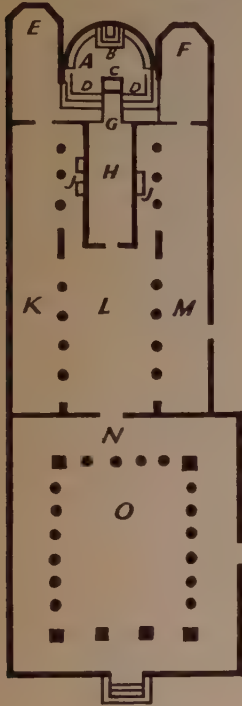


A - Tomb  
B - Stairs  
Plan of St. Sebastian Crypt.

**MASS IN THE BASILICA.** A Roman Basilica was originally a law court or judgment hall. It was a rectangular building with longitudinal rows of columns, with an entrance door at one end, and a semi-circular elongation, called apse, at the other. The floor of the apse was higher than the main floor, and in the apse sat the judge surrounded by his officers. In front of him was an altar, upon which he offered sacrifice before beginning his official business or rendering judgment. The people occupied the main part of the building.

When Constantine made Catholicism the Roman State religion, basilicas were taken over for the sacrifice of the mass with very little

adaptation. With his clerical attendants the bishop or priest took the place of the judge, and he faced the people, who occupied nave and aisles, across the altar. It was thus the priest said mass. There was only one altar in each basilica, and it stood between the clergy and the people. "Mensa Christi est illa in medio posita." (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 46, Chap. 1.)



A - Apse, H - Choir,  
B - Cathedra, J - Ambone,  
C - Altar, K - Left Nave,  
D - Bema, L - Nave,  
E - Prothesis, M - R. Nave,  
F - Apodosis, N - Narthex,  
G - Pergola, O - Atrium.

*Plan of an ancient Christian basilica. (St. Clement).*

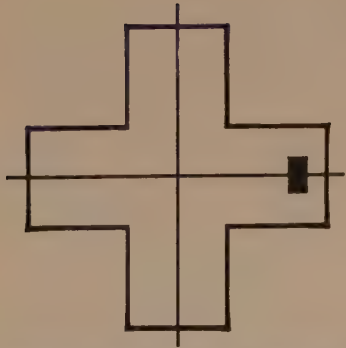
Very soon, however, it became common to move the relics of the martyrs from the catacombs into the basilicas, where they were placed beneath altars. These extra altars could obviously not all be given a central position, and were therefore ranged against the walls, where the priest, in using them, was forced to turn his back to the people. These altars at the sides of the basilica were not put to ordinary or general use. They were employed only on special occasions such as the anniversary of the martyr whose relics were there contained or for masses offered in honor of the martyr imploring his or her aid and intercession. The regular parish communal mass was offered at the central altar, the priest facing the congregation.

**MASS IN THE APSE.** Gradually with the continued freedom from persecution that Catholics now enjoyed, the manner in which Christ was pictured began to be modified. He was thought of more often in his splendid and glorious aspect as the Divine Basileus, King of Kings, Lord of Lords. The Gloria, with its imperial imagery, was added to the liturgy at this time. "Laudamus Te, benedicimus Te, glorificamus Te". To implement

such feelings there was a development of elaborate ceremonial, and a great increase in the number of the clergy. The apse thus became of increasing importance, and was often enlarged. The altar which had previously been placed on the chord of the apse was moved into the clerical precinct itself, which thus became the modern sanctuary.

**MASS IN THE SANCTUARY.** The final step in this progression of the altar was to move it right back against the wall of the apse. Here it became really a shelf against the wall. No longer was it something that could be circumambulated. The priest's back was now inevitably turned to his people, to his guests at the banquet. The way was open to many innovations. The altar was loaded with large candle-sticks, vases of flowers, and other "ornaments". The reredos was elaborated with much richness of detail but little of significance. The cruci-





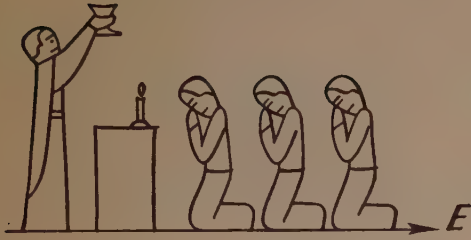
fix of two faces, which had previously hung above the altar,—the Death of Christ figured on one face and His Resurrection on the other,—became a crucifix of one face only exhibiting the dying Christ, and was placed upon the altar itself. And most important development of all, the tabernacle was given a permanent place on the altar. This innovation, though a natural outcome of the shifting of the altar, seems to imply a symbolic confusion. The altar is primarily a table,

where God offers Himself as food and drink for his hungering and thirsting people. The tabernacle is primarily a royal throne, and a throne is a chair. The chair does not belong upon the festive table, but on the main axis behind it. To put the matter another way we might say that the tabernacle in most Catholic Churches today is in the correct location, but that the altar should be moved out from beneath it, to its proper and central place.

**MASS IN THE WILDERNESS.** Under the crude missionary conditions of the 19th century in America, the ecclesiastical tradition was still further modified. Priests were few and churches far between. Seldom were more than a few clergymen able to assemble together and therefore there was no need of an apse to hold their assembly. Churches were apt to be whatever building was available, and a portable altar was erected at the end of whatever room was to be used. The solitariness of the priest, and his portable altar set the note of American ecclesiastical habits.

**MASS IN THE CENTER AGAIN.** To those who have heeded the words of the Holy Father regarding the importance of the Apostolate of the Laity, and who are interested in a return to the simplicity of the early Church, the reestablishment of the single and central altar, and secondarily the revival of the practice of saying mass facing the people—"Thy holy people"—is of great value and an important symbol. Ways of living differ from age to age, and with them those customs that reflect and express ways of living, but no customs are acceptable unless they are vitally related to the lives people actually lead. The obvious next step is a step back to habits that better meet the needs of our time than those with which we grew up. That step has here and there already been taken. At least two central

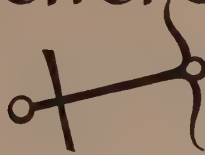
altar churches have already been built in England. Father John O'Connor, a man of original mind, known to readers of G. K. Chesterton's detective stories as "Father Brown", for which fictitious character he was the model,



has built in Bradford an octagonal church, and Eric Gill was consultant in the building of St. Peter's at Gorleston, each with a central altar. (See Eric Gill designs a Church C.A.Q. Vol. 11 No. 4 1939) In this country, in Burlington, Vermont, Father William Tennien has built one in the "modern" style.

We hope that the example of the builders of these churches will be widely followed, that the end for which churches are built may be more perfectly achieved.

ECTEPOC





# Stroke Sequences and Directions in Writing

by E. M. Catich

"It is of the essence of art according to the Ancients, to have settled rules, *viae certae et determinatae*."\* Artistic traditions are largely the handing on from one generation of craftsmen to the next of these same rules. Guilds, or other traditional methods of teaching, are set up largely to make sure that the handing over takes place without loss or degeneration. The treasure of vocational wisdom and knowledge must be passed along from father to son, from mother to daughter, master to apprentice, from teacher to pupil, for only so can the traditions of good workmanship be preserved and renewed. It is the need of learning the "Certain and determined ways" that makes necessary systems of apprenticeship. It is the conviction that one method is not as good as another, and that the best methods must be learned thoroughly, that keeps guilds and apprenticeship in being for countless centuries.

The tradition of writing is an ancient one, and is a craft intimately entwined with daily life—up to the time of the Renaissance it too had its corpus of traditional rules, but the tradition was broken by the invention of printing. When books were no longer written but printed, the art of writing fell from its former position of importance, and the rigidity of its discipline was relaxed. As the art of the press flourished the art of the reed and quill languished.

Today those who are interested in calligraphy, or good writing, realize that it is vital to discover all that can be discovered of the traditional rules. One of the most important of these is the traditional discipline of correct stroke sequences and directions.

If we wrote only capital letters, and designed these always with the greatest deliberation and care, if we never wrote rapidly nor cursively, a fixed sequence of strokes would not be so necessary. But for most writing speed is now, as it has almost always been, an important consideration. Letters must be legible to read, but they must also be rapid to write. A working compromise therefore must be made between the needs of the reading eye and the needs of the writing hand. Among the many possible sequences of strokes there is, in the case of most letters, one which is a better compromise between reading needs and writing needs than all the others.† The classical sequences for Roman majuscules and minuscules are given in the plate on page 24.

A practical knowledge of these classical stroke sequences is valuable for three reasons. It enables the rapid writer to avoid scrawling and illegibility. It enables him to regenerate his scrawling whenever he will, by returning to formal and semi-formal exemplars. And it makes possible an understanding of the historical development of minuscule and cursive letters

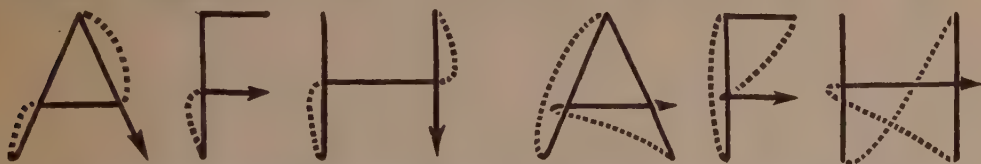
\*Maritain "Art et Scholastique". Chapter VI

†We learn for example that the letter T of two strokes can be made in eight ways; that there are 48 ways of making a three-stroked A, F or H; 384 ways for making a four-stroked M, R or W; and 3840 ways of making an ampersand of five strokes.

from the earlier majuscules.

We must here consider the question of visible and invisible strokes. As the point of the pen moves to shape written characters, it does not always leave a trace of ink in its wake. Part of the time the point is lifted above the paper. But from the point of view of muscular pattern and of the writing hand, the invisible stroke is as truly a stroke as is the visible one. It is a different kind of a stroke, but it is as truly a movement of the pen along a path from one point to another as it would be if it left an ink line behind it. From the point of view of the reading eye, the invisible stroke, being invisible, does not exist. In the diagrams below the visible strokes of A, F, and H are indicated by full and the invisible by dotted lines.

We read with our eyes but we write with our hands. To the reader as such invisible strokes are of small interest, but to the writer they are or should be of great interest. When the tradition of good writing broke at the Renaissance, the chief loss was the loss of the understanding of the necessity of disciplined stroke sequences, which determines the nature of the invisible strokes.



For when writing becomes rapid, it is not always possible to pick up the pen at the proper places, the point tends to drag, and what should be invisible becomes a visible ink trace behind it. And as soon as the invisible stroke becomes visible it does become of interest to the reading eye. It is there on the paper to be seen, and it is seen either as a visual help or visual hindrance. If the stroke sequences followed is correct, as with the A F H on the left, the rapidly written letters are still legible as they begin to resemble familiar minuscule or cursive forms. If they are incorrect, as on the right (and these strokes sequences are those suggested by practically all the lettering and writing authorities who touch on the matter of sequences at all) the writing tends to degenerate into meaningless scribble.

When we use incorrect stroke sequences rapidly we get results which are quite different from those which we intend. For example the F on the left is correct, and though written rapidly still looks like an F. The incorrect sequence of strokes on the right tends to produce a character that looks more like a P than an F.

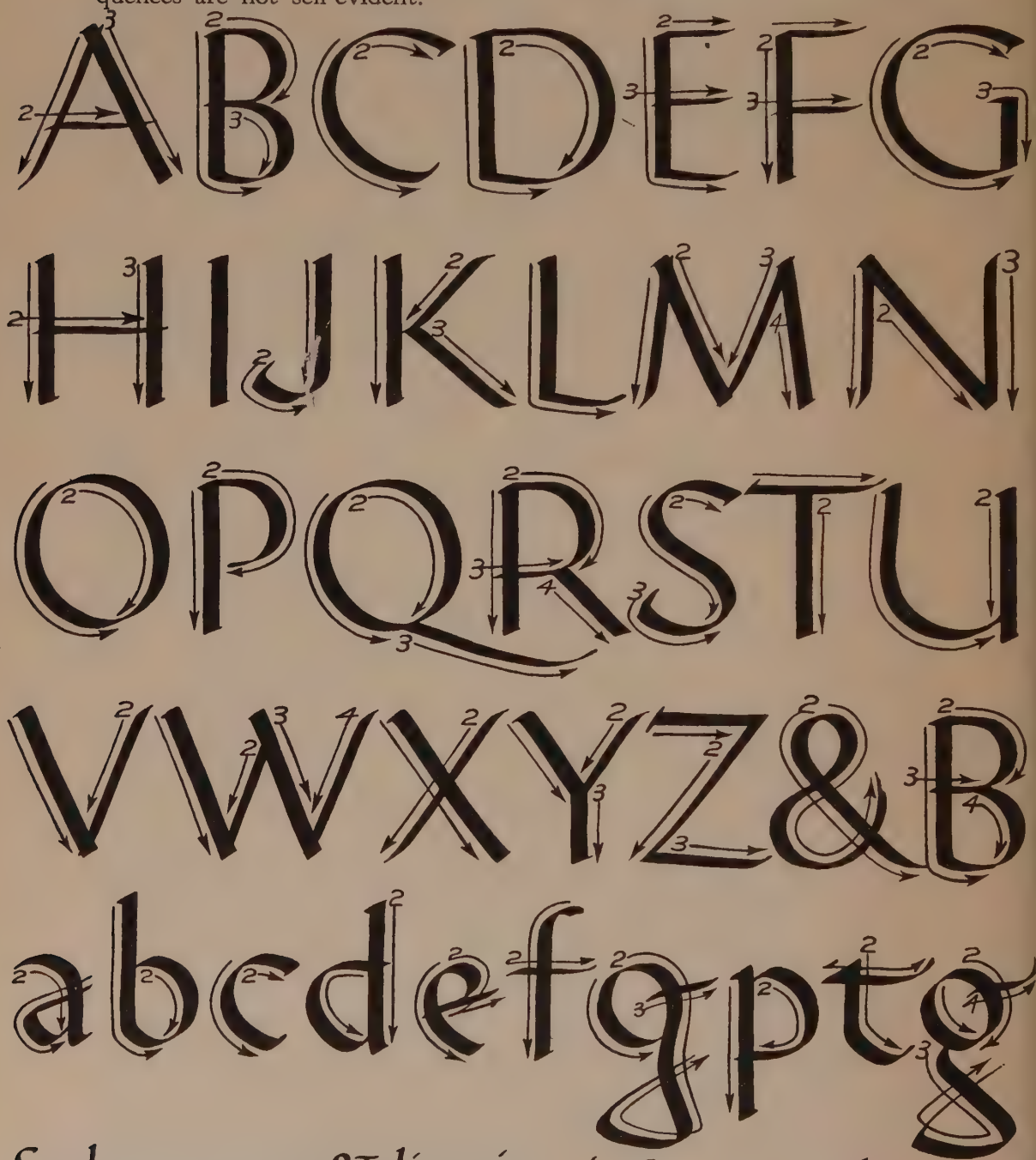


Our minuscule and cursive letters developed from the rapid writing of the majuscule with the correct stroke sequences. Practice with correct sequence will convince any one of this without further paleographic study.

In the plate the sequences are indicated by numbers and the directions by arrowheads. The first stroke is not numbered. These sequences are apt for both brush and reed writing, with perhaps the single exception of B. The formal B may be written with a reed in three strokes (1st line)



but is written with a brush in four (4th line), for a brush will spurt if worked against the hairs. The fifth line shows the minuscules whose stroke sequences are not self-evident.



*Stroke-sequences & directions in formal, reed-written,  
Roman majuscules and minuscules,*

# The National Convention at Baltimore

APRIL 26 and 27, 1946

It seems to have been the general feeling of those members who were able to attend the National Convention held at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland during Easter week that it marked the beginning of new things for the Association, after what has seemed to many a period of not much more than marking time during the war. Certainly our reassociation one with another, our chance to see again one another's faces after so many years, was stimulating and joyous. Our happiness was marred by the unavoidable absence of some of the members we most wanted to see, such as Sister Esther, Sister Helene, and Dr. Bowen; but you can't have everything.

The Convention opened with Missa Recitata at nine o'clock Friday morning. This was followed by the usual introductory formalities, and by Mr. Carey's careful summary of the development of the Association during the past nine years. Because his address is printed in full elsewhere in this issue, no more need be said of it here.

The Business Meeting followed immediately. The points discussed and the action taken on them or subsequently are briefly summarized as follows.

Father Catich presided. The first points he took up concerned a serie of failures of the Association, during the last year, to live up to its own high standards. These acts of contrition were as follows.

1. At the recent elections the ballots carried only one name for each office to be filled, and the unpleasant resemblance of this Hobson's choice to political procedures of certain totalitarian regimes suggested a dictatorial attitude on the part of the president. The fault however was rather that of the advisers who failed in their constitutional duty of sending nominations to the president, and in a general lethargy on the part of the membership which hampered the president in his attempt to obtain nominations otherwise.

The advisory board is considering the appointment of a nominations chairman, whose duty it will be to see that this mistake does not occur again.

2. Father Catich apologized for the lateness in the publication of the Quarterly and explained that the editor, Father Kron, has been carrying a very heavy schedule of parish work, and that his first duty was to his parish rather than to the editorial work of our Quarterly, which was in a sense *extracurricular*. When Father Kron realized that his position was an impossible one, he tendered his resignation which was accepted with regret.

Father Catich undertook to edit the Christmas and Easter issues himself. After much search he has appointed Rev. William J. Kerrigan as temporary editor until the next elections. The Michaelmas issue appeared just before the Convention, the Christmas issue immediately after; and the Easter issue should be in the subscribers' mail boxes before the end of May.



3. Our third act of contrition concerned the mishandling of the proposed Catholic Digest cover competition. There is no need to repeat the details of that fiasco here, but it is salutary to repeat the maxima culpa. The members were asked to send in suggestions for similar competitions should opportunities show themselves, for the managing of such affairs is one of the services which the Association is set up to offer to the Catholic people of this country.

4. It was suggested that the subscription rate should be raised from \$2.00 to \$3.00, but it was decided that in view of our unhappy record of irregularity in publications, this increase should be postponed until June 1947, when we expect that the Quarterly will have appeared on the dot for one whole year. This decision is deeply embarrassing to the treasurer, for his funds are already insufficient; but we felt that we must make such an act of self-denial in order to manifest our truly repentant spirit.

This ends the acts of contrition and the corresponding firm purposes of amendment.

The next point concerned the Advisory Board. Owing to heavy pressure of other work, the resignations of Dom Damasus Winzen, and Dr. Lee Bowen were regretfully accepted. Dr. Bowen was persuaded to accept reappointment, and Mr. Walter Shewring was appointed in Dom Damasus' place. Father Furfey remains the priest member. Mr. Carey was chosen general chairman of the board, in the hope that in future the members could keep in closer contact, and be of greater service to the Association.



6. In order that the Quarterly may be better known it was proposed and agreed that free subscriptions should be sent to fifty key people (not necessarily Catholics) for one year. Sister Philomene, Miss Bethune, and Mr. Carey were appointed as a committee to prepare the list of the fortunate fifty. Mr. Carey (Fair Haven, Vermont), as chairman, will be glad to receive suggestions of names that may be included in this list.

7. A proposal of somewhat similar objectives—to make the Association better known to others—was that we should issue a number of explanatory leaflets from time to time about our aims and work. This was agreed to and put in the hands of a publicity committee, to consist of Sister

Carlotta of Covington, Kentucky; Sister Leonarda of Yankton, South Dakota, and Sister Augusta of Mt. St. Joseph, Ohio, as chairman.

8. It was further decided to ask Sister Helene, O. P., to continue her work on the index of the C. A. Q., bringing this to the end of its tenth year, so that the index could be published at the end of the tenth volume in 1947.

9. Another committee was appointed to attend to the publication of a volume, or volumes, consisting of a selection of essays from the C. A. Q. up to the present. We felt that such publications would not only be of value in themselves, but would help to make the Association known to a wider public.

10. It was also proposed that members of the Association should design and engrave dies for the production of religious medals, and that the Association itself should act as a center of distribution for the medals thus struck. This proposal was disapproved on the ground that the sale of medals would destroy the legal status of the C. A. A. as a non-profit organization, and thus entail endless legal difficulties. It was decided, however, that the members interested should carry on the work outside the legal limits of the Association, and report progress to the Association at a later date. A list of medals most suitable for redesign was drawn up.



11. Miss Bethune, the recently elected chairman, in charge of the Travelling Exhibit, proposed that the show should be exhibited at the place of the National Convention each year, and that members should make it a point to bring work of theirs each year to the Convention for exhibition, and for possible inclusion in the travelling exhibit. It was decided to drop the word "professional" in connection with the Travelling Show. Miss Bethune asked that those interested in receiving the exhibit should notify her as far as possible in advance so that she may plan a logical and inexpensive itinerary.

12. It was proposed to change the singular word ART, in the title both of the Association and the Quarterly, to the plural ARTS, as being a better expression of the traditional conceptions which we exist to propagate. Action on this proposal was postponed until the next meeting.



13. It was not possible to determine the time and place of the 1947 meeting at this convention, but we hope that it will soon be announced in the Quarterly.

14. The last point dealt with was the reorganization of the Eastern Regions. There are three of these (1) the New England Region directed by Miss Bethune, (2) the Eastern Region proper, directed by Sister Noreen, and (3) the New York and New Jersey area, which has never had an organization. Only Sister Noreen's region has been really active in recent years. She and Miss Bethune have long wished to resign, and had been promised that they could do so at the first National Convention after the war. They both resigned and their resignations were accepted. It was then voted to set up a single "Atlantic" Region in the place of the three now directorless old regions, and to call on the members from the States concerned to elect a nominating committee to submit names to the president, which would then be voted on by the members of the new region. This committee consisted of Sister Noreen, Miss Bethune, and Mother Justin, O. S. U., and they have submitted their nominations to Father Catich.

This was the last item taken up at the Business Meeting.

After lunch the conveners enjoyed the relaxation of watching and often taking part in the Workshop Demonstrations. We saw Father Catich cutting and leading glass, Sister Leonarda performing wonders of dexterity with the reed pen, Mr. Carey engraving a small silver medal, Paula Eicke demonstrating the art of the ceramist and Mary Catherine Finegan that of the wood engraver. Nancy Price did a beautiful job carving letters in a slab of stone, and Miss Bethune showed the ancient art of painting in egg tempera on gesso grounds.

The demonstrations not only were interesting in the sense of entertaining, but they were useful in a deeper way in that they gave a visible proof of the contention that we have so often made, that a simple technique once it is understood to a certain point, is far easier, and produces fine results with far less difficulty, than is often suspected. If our material is suited to the idea we wish to impose upon it, and the tool suited to the material, and if we discipline ourselves to hold the tool as it should be held, the rest is easy, and the result often astonishingly satisfactory.

This was the sort of demonstrations which encourages rather than discourages the person who thinks himself doomed to incompetence in the arts. We all received draughts of a healing medicine.

Father Catich then treated us to a lively explanation of the Christian truth that in art as in life it is Substance that is of first importance and Accidents that are secondary. In other words, all the aspects of artistic activity should be kept in their proper places. All means must be subordinated to their end, and that end must be a worthy one. All artistic means are good in themselves, but when they become ends they are thor-

oughly bad ends. This hierarchy was his general theme, and was that of the "forum" which he conducted in the evening after supper. He illustrated it with about everything from the Volga boatmen's pulling their boat in order to have an excuse of singing, Chinese calligraphy, and trombone players' imitating fiddles, to an account of how a wolf brings down a bull moose. The illustrations were varied, the presentation was dramatic, and the points went home.

The second day of convention began with Missa Cantata, followed by a thoughtful discussion by Reverend Gerard Kernan, S. J. of St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia, on the relationship between "Modern Art" so-called and the Catholic Artistic Tradition. He felt that wild and rootless and egotistical as much of the work of the moderns is, the force that drives them is in itself natural and good, and that Catholics, both for their own sake, and for that of the "modern" artists, should be much more cognizant than they are of the work that is going on in the contemporary shops and studios.

Father Kernan raised again a question with which the Association has been wrestling since its inception—and as individuals before. How can we take the good of the moderns, and leave the bad? How can we take the good of the traditionalists and the ancients, and leave the bad or the unsuitable? And the answer is as easy in theory as it is difficult in practice. Each age must have its principles and forms correct, unchanging because unchangeable, and each must impose these on the materials with means and for purposes truly of its own time.

The Travelling Exhibition, which most of us had not seen for many years, was encouraging because most of its items showed a successful solution to this problem. Thomas Derrick, David Jones, Eric Gill, Denis Tegetmeier, Constance Mary Rowe, Ade Bethune, John Benson, Casimir Michalczyk, Wright Goodhue, Philip Hagreen, and the others had achieved practical solutions in their work. No one could say that these things were not traditional in the good sense and modern in the good sense, at one and the same time. No one could say that they were either derivative or "futurist." We hope that Father Kernan was encouraged to see that many Catholic artists have been giving successful solutions to the problem he posed. It is a problem that will never be finally solved, for it will arise anew in every generation, but it is already far easier for the Catholic artist to achieve his solution of it than it was twenty years ago.

Father Kernan was immediately followed by Father Catich, who read a paper on the art of Stained Glass Window Making, which was really a contribution to the same discussion. How are we to be both modern and traditional in making colored windows? We can answer only when we know what windows essentially are. What were the causes of these windows? Their traditional purpose was twofold, to illuminate internal spaces covered by a roof and shut off from other space by four walls, and to illuminate minds with the truths of Christian doctrine at a time when



most people did not know how to read books. What were the materials and the efficient means by which these materials were given their new forms? Glass, lead comes, iron rods, and saddle bars. Only one who has worked long with these knows the limitations of the materials and their appropriate instruments. And only he who has these technical limitations as part of his mental furniture, whose brain is full of colored glass and lead (as Michael Angelo boasted that his blood was full of marble dust) and who is equally familiar with the practical requirements of those, his patrons, whose *need* is for windows—only such a man can determine in his mind, see in his imagination, the forms, patterns, and arrangements of glass and lead which are the best in that particular situation.

Father Catich's talk was much more expansive, but to this reporter that was its substance. It was a repetition, using an entirely different idiom, of the same truths—the same so necessary truths—that Father Kernan had just been explaining to us. The craftsman says it in one way, the student of books in another way. It is the same truth.



After lunch we returned to the demonstrations, and to the gallery. We voted for our favorites among the collections of Hagreen proofs there shown, on the basis of which voting fifteen designs were ultimately selected. It is hoped that before long these designs will be on sale in this country. It is strange, and quite wrong, that work which is so enthusiastically admired whenever it is shown to Catholic artists should still be unavailable to the public in this country. It is wrong, and our voting was, we hope, a step toward righting that wrong. And so we voted, and cut our fingers with Father Catich's glass, and burned them with his soldering iron, and marvelled at Nancy Price's skill in cutting that forbidding looking stone, and a good time was had by all.

Then came what was maybe the most *important*, and was certainly one of the most engrossing, of the occasions of the convention—Miss Bethune's talk on her method for the teaching of manuscript writing in the schools. Her method is so new that it has not yet been adopted in any school, but it is as old as alphabetic writing itself. She showed that all

the praiseworthy efforts to establish legible and rapid modes of writing have failed because their protagonists had not taken the trouble to find out what the letters were—how they developed historically, obedient to what calligraphic laws, which are only philosophic principles applied to the business of writing letters with pen or brush. In particular she traced the history of recent attempts in this country, that of Mr. Palmer and of the advocates of “manuscript writing” who followed him. They failed, their reforms turned into fads, their legibility turned into illegibility, because they had not studied their problem whole. They had not studied the relation of the visual sense to the kinaesthetic sense (the sense by which we read to the sense by which we write.) They had not seen the relation between the ink stroke which we make with the hand and see in the trace of ink the pen leaves, and the “hidden stroke” which the hand also makes, but which leaves no trace. They had not seen the supreme importance of a fixed sequence of strokes. This was the most important omission of all.

To show the importance of correct stroke sequences Miss Bethune took us back to 1600 before Christ, to the first ideographs from which the Semitic, then the Greek, then the Roman, the medieval and modern alphabets, right down to the Palmer and manuscript writing methods, have descended. She showed how adherence to a fixed sequence of strokes has kept alive the traditional continuity, and how changes in it have resulted in calligraphic back eddies, blind alleys, fads, and illegibility. She showed us this for every one of the 22 proto-Hebraic letters, and showed how simply our own 26 capitals and the corresponding 26 lower case have come down from them. She showed how the right sequence is really right, not because some arbiter has so decreed, but because it, and often it only, gives a combination of kinaesthetic and visual simplicity, which results in speed on the one hand, and legibility on the other. This combination of legibility and speed it is which keeps writing from degenerating. If the letters can't be written with rapid ease they are of little use, and if they can't be read they are of no use at all.





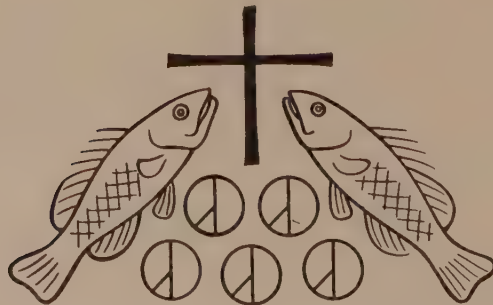
As those know who understand the doctrine of the Mean, there is one truth and myriad falsehoods, one goodness and myriad badnesses, one beauty and myriad uglinesses in any given situation. And so it is with stroke sequences. There is one right way and many wrong ones. This reporter is no mathematician, but he computes that the capital M with its four strokes (each of which may be written in either direction, up or down) can be made in 384 different ways, that is with 384 different kinaesthetic patterns, though the visual patterns are all exactly the same. The four-stroke R would also have 384 different patterns, each producing a similar appearance, but each having a completely different essence. For it is not the eye that writes, but the hand; not the visual but the kinaesthetic sense that is in control. It is the eye that reads.

It began to look, as Miss Bethune unfolded her doctrine with convincing clarity and logic, as if we are going to have a calligraphic reform to end calligraphic reforms after all, and hard-bitten old type designers and make-up men in the audience were heard to mumble complaints: "Why wasn't I told this years ago?" "I've been building these letters wrong all my life."

Well, all good things have to come to an end, and conventions are no exception. After Miss Bethune's revelation, we met again in the chapel for Benediction, and properly ended our two days as we had begun them, on our knees,

And then we left, full of gratitude to Sister Mary Thomasine, who had invited us to accept her hospitality here; and to Sister Noreen, who had carried the burden of organization and made the thousand decisions and arrangements that made this convention what it was, and our experience of it so happy and so hopeful of good things to come.

LAUS DEO



## Questions and Answers



Q. "In the ichthus and drawings symbolising the miracles of the loaves and fishes, I notice that the Quarterly makes frequent use of inland fresh-water fishes such as the Mississippi catfish, bullheads and trout; fishes which were not known in Biblical times. Wouldn't it be better to make drawings of Eastern Mediterranean fish since these are the correct types?"

A. The drawings referred to are symbols. They are expressions of an idea in a material. The symbolic idea of the Ichthus is Christ the Saviour. The symbolic material is a fish. Any fish will do provided the representation is as clear as possible. The clearest representation will be that kind of fish of which both symbol-maker and symbol-user have the most accurate knowledge. In any country, therefore, the good symbolic artist will use the local materials—the things with which both he and his patrons are most familiar. An Italian artist will draw Italian fish, a Chinese artist Chinese fish. An Iowa artist has the same duty. The idea to be presented is the important thing. The legibility of the idea expressed in the drawing is the end for which the artist works. Biological minutiae are permissible only if they in no way interfere with this legibility.



Ι Χ Θ Υ Σ

The purpose of the symbol is Christology not ichthyology.

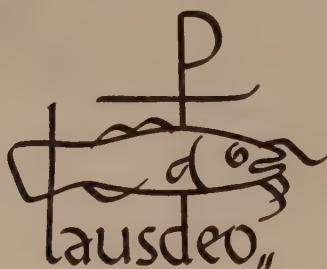
The same principle applies to differences of time as well as of space. Healthy art is almost always anachronistic, that is, it dresses the events it portrays in the habiliments of its own period which it knows, rather than in its deficient notion of those of a past which it does not know. The important thing is the idea for which the scene represented stands—the crossing of the Red Sea; the flight into Egypt; the marriage at Cana; the massacre of the Holy Innocents. Historical accuracy in dress and architecture usually weakens the presentation of the idea, in that it takes away from its timelessness. Ideas are ageless but, they may be freshly and vigorously represented in every age, in terms which are natural to that age. When we quote the words of Christ we do not pedantically insist on using the Aramaic dialect in which He actually spoke the words. We use the best modern English equivalent available. It is the idea that matters not the accidents of sound or sight with which the idea is clothed.





Medieval and Byzantine portrayals of the incidents in the Old and New Testaments were always conceived as if they were occurring in the artist's own country and epoch. The plays of Shakespeare were acted right down into the 18th century in "modern dress" and Hamlet and his father's ghost appeared in knee breeches and ruffles. In our generation the tide has already turned. The English Christian artists represented in the C. A. A. traveling exhibit, Thomas Derrick, David Jones, Eric Gill, Philip Hagreen and the rest, all use the anachronistic principle fully. We are glad to see that most of our C. A. A. artists do the same. It is a sign of minds that are interested in essentials rather than in accidentals.

The bass, bullheads and suckers used in our symbols are in the same healthy tradition, the age old tradition of normal religious art.



Q. "Please tell me what you consider the essential fault with our Catholic education? We of course teach the secular subjects, but we also teach religion, and we try to teach the secular subjects as far as possible in the light of religion. Yet in some ways our education seems as ineffective as that of the purely secular schools and colleges."

A. This is a large question to answer briefly. One answer would be this. Traditional education seems always to have been based on the idea of variety of vocations, and on the idea that man is both body and spirit, both real, both good, and both dependent on each other, with a primacy for the spiritual. To do things well there must be a certain degree of specialization. In any normal society there must be masons, smiths, carpenters, physicians, men of letters and farmers. Each vocation has a material usefulness, and a spiritual content, or meaning. It feeds both the

bodily and the spiritual needs of man. Every way of living is a means towards the maintenance and enrichment of earthly life, but each way is also a means toward the achievement of the eternal life. Any trade is at once practical and a symbol of man's relation to God. Education is conceived of as a preparation for life, for life on both levels—material and immaterial—and for both *together*.

Thus in a traditional or sacred society the apprentice, and later the journeyman, learned not only the technical part of his craft—the management of materials and tools and the relation of technique to purpose—but he learned also the analogies of his craft with the doings of God. He mastered the necessary skills of his vocation for his bodily livelihood, and the meaning of his vocation for his spiritual growth. And he learned both, as he should, together. What today we call his vocational education and his cultural education were received together, in relation to each other, and in the same trade. A cultured man was simply one who thoroughly understood his business, who saw his business *sub specie aeternitatis*.



In the Middle Ages not all productive activities, but most of those in the towns were organized in guilds. The guild not only maintained standards of workmanship, but took care of its own self-perpetuation by its system of education, the apprentice system. Each vocation was organized to teach both the material and immaterial traditions, and to teach them as far as possible together. The stone masons were one of the most important of these guilds. They were so not only on account of the material importance of their work as the planners and builders of permanent edifices, but because of the richness of the age-old analogies between the man-made house of stones and the edifice of the universe built out of nothing by the hand of God.

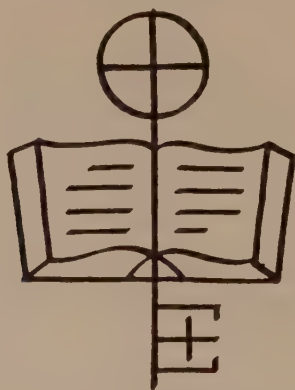
The opposition, often violent, of Free Masonry to the Church is apt to be its chief interest for Catholics, but here Masonry has another lesson for us. It seems to be a mutilated survival of one of the great Medieval guilds, its abnormality consisting not merely in its opposition to the traditional Christianity, but in the fact that it perpetuates one half only of the medieval synthesis of work and culture. It offers to men of a wide range of vocations



the "cultural" half of the craft of the ancient builders,—the spiritual and analogical half. Except by accident its members are no longer cutters and fitters of stones. They no longer practice the craft of masonry for their livelihoods. But they hope to ennoble and enrich their lives by reference to the symbolisms appropriated to the calling they no longer practice. Their ritual is based on the analogy of the macrocosmic and microcosmic houses, but they are no longer makers of houses.

One other great Medieval guild has come down to our day in a somewhat similarly mutilated form. This is the guild of those whose living depended in one way or another on the use of letters—the clerks. The Roman name for guild was "collegium," and the colleges, and the universities they made up, were the clerical guilds of the Middle Ages. The men of religion, of medicine, of law, found their natural places therein. In these guilds there was the same machinery for maintaining rights of members, of qualitative standards, and of education. In them were practiced and taught the literary arts and those dependent on letters, and at the same time the meaning of these arts, their spiritual content. The clerks' guild had its "degrees" as did the masons' and carpenters' guilds—bachelor, master, doctor.

The degradation of the old guild of letters is clear when we consider what the letters Ph. D. originally meant, and what they mean today. A doctor of philosophy should be a *teacher of the love of Wisdom*, a man judged by his guild to be worthy of that high function.



The weakness of our present educational system is that it is based on a degenerate form of the teaching part of the ancient "collegium" of the letter-users. The primary schools lead to the secondary and then to college, where a training is given which is supposed to give both "culture" and vocational guidance to young people of all kinds. There is no longer any conception of a strict discipline in one vocation and a deep and broad interpretation of the facts of that vocation as the "culture" of those that labor therein. The present educational system teaches no craft thoroughly and

has no understanding of the traditional relationship between physical and spiritual livelihood. It is a leveling system which is also a deadening one.

To sum up this answer to the question: the modern secular system of education proposes a single standard type of culture for people of all vocations, whereas the traditional system assumes that culture is the metaphysical or religious aspect of any vocation. To paraphrase the Sage, cultivation is not a special calling, but every calling has its special kind of cultivation.

Q. "Why is St. Luke the patron saint of artists? This seems to be a pious legend for certainly there is no authentic historic and artistic verification that he was an artist."

A. It is sufficient that the Church has put artists under the patronage of St. Luke. Whether or not he actually practiced the arts of painting and carving, he was a master of the literary art. He made well what needed making—his gospel and the Acts.





# Is It Catholic?

by William J. Kerrigan

THE new editor (*pro tempore*, the note on page 25 encourages him to hope) would have preferred to limit his activities to copyreading and proofreading. In fact, he began well by rejecting one of his own manuscripts, although help offered by Mr. Carey might have made it a quite satisfactory piece. Circumstances have combined, however, to make seem advisable this word of introduction, long though it may appear from one who intends to tarry so briefly.

Copyreading, linotype composition, and proofreading—skills acquired by long and painful practice—measure a man's patience and resourcefulness. Neither of these two virtues is indefinitely expansible. I am therefore offering free and postpaid to prospective C. A. Q. contributors and other interested people a mimeographed page entitled *Asylums Are Overcrowded* and dedicated to preserving sanity among all us poor wights who have printer's ink under our fingernails. The page will not partake of the comedy of its title; it will comprise hints for making manuscripts manageable by the man at the desk and the man at the machine. The offer is serious: write today.

My real initiation to the Fine Art of literature was the following lesson (good C. A. A. philosophy for all I know) from an editor: "The printer has more to do than you have. His time is worth more to us than yours, he ordinarily does a better job than you, and we pay him more money. Now go back and retype that copy so that he won't go blind trying to make it out." Now I try to make this my maxim: "Not what the printer *can* understand, but rather what he *can't help* understanding." Surely C. A. A. members want to make manuscript preparation as careful as is all their other artistry. And those considerations lead to my next ones.

SPIRITUS PARACLITUS

DOCEBIT VOS OMNIA



A Catholic artist, whether making an icon or writing for C. A. Q., often finds that he is communicating ideas about religion to those who see his work. He is, in other words, *teaching theology*. Need I say that this is a grave responsibility? It is especially grave for us who are not theologians. Let us therefore take this as our rule: not what we can deduce from the Scriptures, not what a dictum of St. Thomas's leads us on to saying, not what can be bolstered by an isolated phrase from some encyclical, not the mere product of our private meditations, but *what the Church is actually teaching*—that, and only that, is *Catholic*; that, and only that, is what we should propagate by image, symbol and word under the name of Catholicism.

Revelation is completed, the deposit of Faith is closed, only the Church teaches officially, and it is *orthodoxy*—not originality—that must mark whatever we dare label “Catholic”. I shudder today when I see “Catholic” publications proposing teachings to be found nowhere in standard manuals of theology, or in St. Thomas, or in the pronouncements of the Church. I fear the more because often these “Catholic” utterances form a complexus strangely similar to the teachings of the religious innovators of the “Reformation.” I mention it here both because Catholic artists are peculiarly likely to pick up this pseudo-Catholicism from irresponsible little magazines and because without extreme care they might allow their own C. A. Q. also to exercise such vicious influence.

Let this be our rule: not what *can* be construed as orthodoxy, but what *cannot help* being construed as orthodoxy. Recently I asked for a picture of Christ on a white horse. Everyone was horrified. An equestrian Christ! Yet you will find a quite detailed such picture in the Apocalypse. Nobody, on the other hand, blinks at Christ's being pictured at a carpenter's bench. Yet where in the Scriptures, where among the Fathers, where in St. Thomas, where in the official teachings of the Church do you find that Christ exercised the art of carpentry? Nowhere, that I can find. I mention this in view of the Church's rejection of a proposed feast of Christ the Worker. Again, I often see the Holy Family pictured as living in poverty. The Scriptures do not say they did; and St. Thomas, in fact, tells us that they were moderately well off.

Finally, some great enthusiasm—Catholic art, with us—can lead us to pushing one element of Catholicism (one sacrament, one virtue, one encyclical, one dogma) so far that it crowds out others. Such a choice is heresy, in the very etymological sense of the word. Yet the same man sometimes screams insistence on some liturgical rubric in one breath, flouts Canon Law in the next, and kicks out from under him the support he seeks from the Council of Trent by appealing to one of its canons almost while in the act of violating another.

These considerations are more important than any on manuscript preparation.



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